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Online  
ISSN 1440-9828



January 2011 No 541

## Exhibition breaks with German Hitler taboos



### Berlin Historical Museum opens 'Hitler and the Germans: Nation and Crime'

A new exhibition opening this week at Berlin's German Historical Museum aims to break taboos by exploring the fascination with Adolf Hitler and his relationship with the German people, the curator said. <http://www.thelocal.de/gallery/culture/1035/>







## Nervous Germany stages first Hitler exhibition, Hitler and the Germans

Roger Boyes, From: *The Times*, October 13, 2010 11:04AM

**HITLER is back in town. An extremely nervous Germany is staging the first exhibition dedicated to the Nazi leader since the Fuhrer killed himself in his Berlin bunker in 1945.**

The exhibition, entitled *Hitler and the Germans*, shatters a taboo. Since World War II there have been scores of museum displays on the Holocaust, on slave labour, on the murdering doctors, cruel judges and massacring soldiers, and all have triggered debates and protests.

Hitler, himself, however, has always been out of bounds - and in Berlin most of all, lest neo-Nazis swarm to the museum to pay tribute to the dictator of the Third Reich. The emotional power of Hitler was shown two years ago when a wax model was put on display in the Berlin branch of Madame Tussauds - prompting an enraged visitor to push past security guards and rip off the figure's head.

It seems, though, that times have changed. "Neo-Nazis have not been known to cross the threshold of museums in the

past," said Hans-Ulrich Thamer, curator of the Hitler show in the German Historical Museum in Berlin. A spokesman, Rudolf Trabold, added: "We should even hope that they do come and get to grips with what we are putting on show, and how we're doing it."

The exhibition will open on Friday and continue until February next year.

The museum itself is part of the old Zeughaus, or arsenal, the scene of an unsuccessful attempt to blow up Hitler. Across the road is the Bebelplatz where Nazis made a huge bonfire out of "decadent" books.

A 10-minute walk away is the patch of green concealing Hitler's wartime bunker. For decades it was unmarked; now there is an information board. That, too, was seen as an important breakthrough: an attempt to connect Hitler with his old centre of power rather than deny his existence.

The new exhibition tries hard not to provoke. When it was first mooted in 2004, historians immediately rejected the idea of calling it simply Hitler; that, it was felt, would have been too shocking for the Germans. The theme has been broadened: how did Hitler interact with the Germans?

None of Hitler's many tunics is on display and anything that could have been touched by the Fuhrer has been banished from the museum. Nor are there any bone fragments. "Don't worry," said one historian after getting a sneak preview. "They have made sure that you won't come into contact with any of Hitler's DNA."

Rather than show a massive 1939 oil portrait of the Fuhrer - in storage in the US since the war - the organisers have opted for a smaller reproduction. Glorifying Hitler is still an offence that can lead to jail in Germany and so one of the display techniques has been to miniaturise him, to bring him down to scale. There are plenty of Hitler busts, but even these have been carefully positioned so that neo-Nazis cannot make capital out of them.

"I have stuffed seven busts in a single display case," said the co-curator Klaus-Juergen Sembach. "It will be really difficult to strike some heroic pose next to them for the camera."

Instead, the exhibits are "embedded", or put in context. Typically, three photographic portraits of Hitler are set next to a screen showing German soldiers marching past burning houses.

There are harmless curiosities: a lampshade with a swastika; a "Fuhrerquartett" card game; the equivalent of Happy Families, with players aiming to collect a set of four cards bearing the picture of Hitler or other Nazis. Good, clean fun, apparently, in 1939.

Some exhibits have come from US collectors - GIs who were stationed in Berlin as the Third Reich collapsed and who picked up Hitler souvenirs, took them home and helped to create the most active Nazi militaria market in the world. Others are from Moscow archives.

There has been cautious approval for the exhibition from normally critical voices. "We do need a range of different ways of dealing with national socialism," said Levi Salomon, of the Central Council for German Jews. Simone Erpel from the German Historical Museum agrees: "We're not finished yet with Hitler. Every generation has to find its own answers."

Germany, in other words, is still struggling to deal with Hitler, but is finding it a little easier.

After the war, a group of German journalists and political advisers met to discuss whether the nation was ready to see Charlie Chaplin's film *The Great Dictator*. It took 13 years before the film was released in German cinemas.

A Berlin exhibition 16 years ago of the photographs by Hitler's court photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, had to be called off in case it stirred Nazi sympathies. The Hitler salute remains banned, as is the swastika.

From this week, though, it seems to be all right to take the kids to see the Fuhrer, or at least the various bits of paraphernalia that were connected with him.

Significantly, however, the posters advertising the exhibition do not display his face - as if looking into his eyes could induce, again, a kind of mass hypnosis.

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### From Adelaide Institute's Archive:

De: Fredrick Toben [toben@toben.biz](mailto:toben@toben.biz)

Asunto: Natural Justice - where's that? Who's that?

Para: [boadiceamc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:boadiceamc@hotmail.co.uk)

**Nice of you to feature this matter - I would have loved to have given the British the Holocaust laws through precedent - NOT!**  
**When will there be enough to cry ENOUGH of EUROPE!**

Cheers, Fredrick

Sunday, 27 December 2009

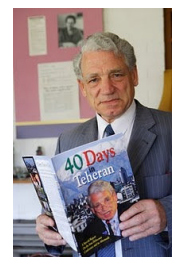
#### European Arrest Warrants: A Blow Against Natural Justice

In this week's **Private Eye** [#1252] there's an interesting piece on European Arrest Warrants (EAWs) and their abuse. They highlight three cases in Greece, France and Portugal of trials which fell way below accepted norms (flimsiest evidence, guilt *in absentia* and more).

Of course for nationalists we have to worry that German laws on questioning history could mean the extradition of British subjects who have broken no UK law, on the flimsiest of evidence by political courts.

This is the way the European Union is heading and it should worry *anyone* who believes in the rights of nations to assert their own laws, traditions, justice, rights, let alone free and fair trials without undue pressure whether from jingoistic media, corrupt local officials or a political class.

Wasn't Fredrick Toben (pictured below), who was convicted of the bizarre crime (sic) of "offending the memory of the dead" in Germany in 1999 [Oliver Cromwell was a despot who banned Christmas - am I guilty too?], almost extradited from Britain on a 2004 EAW despite being an Australian citizen [and thus, for better or worse, a subject of Her Maj] and having broken no UK law? Only the brave decision by District Judge Daphne Wickham ruled the warrant invalid as it contained inadequate detail about the offences.



Even back in the early 80s Margaret Thatcher's government had the sense to see through arrest warrants issued by Italian Communist mayors and officials against young nationalists

(Fiore, Morsello and others), charges based on corrupted evidence (sic) and guilty verdicts obtained *in absentia*, which have since been disproved in the Italian courts (and various newspapers - in Italy and the UK - which spread the Communist lies having been successfully sued).

So if you have the chance read the article in Private Eye (on page 32, within the "In The Back" section of the magazine) and you will understand why the cases of Andrew Symeou, Deborah Dark and Gary Mann should have *all* patriots worried. The sad thing is that liberals and leftists (inc/or/and Private

Eye journalists) have chosen to ignore cases such as Toben's for shady political reasons and the Good Friday get-out clause ("they hid... for fear of the..." [Zionists of the day, ahem!]). Big Brother is not around the corner. As more British citizens are finding out for themselves, Big Brother is alive and well and living in Brussels.

<http://finalconflictblog.blogspot.com/2009/12/european-arrest-warrants-blow-against.html>

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## **- Carlos Porter: I hate the EEC with a passion - "Blood and Honour" Interviews CARLOS W. PORTER**

[www.cwporter.com/interview.htm](http://www.cwporter.com/interview.htm)

**Q: Hello, Mr. Porter, may we commence with the most typical question possible: could you please introduce yourself swiftly to our readership?**

**Porter:** As far as I know I am the only person who ever read the Nuremberg Trial transcript all the way through, not once, but several times. I have three different versions of it. I also have the complete Tokyo Trial transcript, 52,000 pages.

I have an Internet site, [www.cwporter.com](http://www.cwporter.com), with 900 files on war crimes and Nuremberg, including 600 graphics: scans of actual pages from the Nuremberg Trial transcript, scans of the so-called "original" Nuremberg Trial documents, and translations. People quote these things, but they never look at them. Some of these documents have never even translated before. These are documents which most historians have never seen. I have thousands of dollars worth of law books, criminal law, international law, and I have written a number of articles on international law, for example, <http://www.cwporter.com/wctrial.htm>, <http://www.cwporter.com/cc1.htm>, <http://www.cwporter.com/warcrim45.htm>.

Nuremberg is not valid law. Nothing in international law gives the victor power to legislate in international law. Most of the post-war trials had no basis in law; I don't know of any offhand that did. Maybe some of the minor Japanese trials. But I doubt it.

In 1900, Britain invaded the Boer Republics, stole the gold mines, turned the Western Transvaal into a "smoking desert" (in their own words), imprisoned 110,000 women and children in concentration camps where 28,000 of them died, then, after the war, they tried and shot 2 Boer officers for "misusing a flag of truce"! You're wasting your time looking for justice in any post-war trial. They are simply a continuation of the war.

**Q: If I am not mistaken your first publication *Made in Russia: The Holocaust deals with the grotesque exaggerations of the Allies concerning the so-called "judeocide". Could you name a few?***

**Porter:** Steaming people to death like lobsters at 10 "steam chambers" at Treblinka, zapping them to death with mass electrical shocks, blasting them into the Twilight Zone with atomic bombs, killing 840,000 Russians in 30 days at Sachsenhausen with a pedal-driven brain-bashing machine and burning them all in 4 portable ovens, forcing people to climb trees, then cutting the trees down (as a method of murder), frying chambers, quicklime chambers, vacuum chambers, quicklime chambers, etc. etc.

I collected about a hundred of these, plus examples of all their grotesque legal irregularities and documentary absurdities. The book is 415 pages long. It discusses the prosecution case exclusively - and is now back in print, available from [www.third-reich-books.com/x-636-Made-in-Russia-the-Holocaust.htm](http://www.third-reich-books.com/x-636-Made-in-Russia-the-Holocaust.htm).

The book begins with the rhetorical question:

If the Germans gassed millions of Jews, did they also:

- Steam people to death like lobsters in 10 steam chambers at Treblinka;
- Zap them to death with mass electrical shocks;

- Blast them into the twilight zone with atomic bombs;
  - Beat people to death, then carry out autopsies to see why they died;
  - Force people to climb trees, then cut the trees down;
  - Kill 840,000 Russian Pows at Sachsenhausen, and burn the bodies in 4 portable ovens;
  - Bash people's brains in with a pedal-driven brain-bashing machine while listening to the radio, then burn the bodies in 4 portable ovens;
  - Torture and execute people in time to music at the Yanov camp in Russia;
  - Shoot every member of the orchestra;
  - Grind the bones of millions of people in portable bone-grinding machines;
  - Grind the bones of 200 bodies [¾ ton] at one time, as described in photographs and documents which have disappeared;
  - Study bone grinding in special 10-day crash-course seminars;
  - Whup people with special spanking machines;
- (Note that photographs of German leaders, concentration camps, etc., are in full supply, but that photos of bone grinders, portable ovens, etc., have all disappeared)
- Make lampshades of human skin;
  - Cut people's heads off and then shrink them -- make pocketbooks and driving gloves for SS officers out of human skin;
  - Paint pornographic pictures on canvasses made of human skin;
  - Bind books in human skin;
  - Make saddles, riding breeches, gloves, house slippers, and ladies handbags out of human skin;
  - Drive Jews to cannibalism in all those freight cars;
  - More "scientific experiments"
  - another ridiculous accusation -
  - another bizarre hallucination -
  - another example of German efficiency;
  - Torture people in specially mass-produced "torture boxes" made by Krupp;
  - Kill people for sleeping in their underwear;
  - Kill people for wearing dirty underwear;
  - Wear underwear stolen from gassed persons;
  - (didn't they have any underwear in Germany?)
  - Kill people for having armpit hair;
  - Stuff chairs with human hair;
  - (an objection from defendant Göring)
  - Make socks out of human hair;
  - (actually, the correct translation should be hair-yarn "booties" for U-boat crews)
  - Collect seven tons of hair for human sock making;



- Collect 293 hair bales (net weight seven thousand kilograms) at Auschwitz for mattress stuffing and making hair socks;
- Gas them to death, then destroy the bodies with quicklime at Auschwitz; Use human ashes for repairing the roads;
- Mix human ashes with manure and sell it;
- Burn human bodies using human fat for fuel;
- Burn human bodies using no fuel at all after removing them from the gas chambers without wearing gas masks;
- Burn 80,000 bodies in 2 old ovens;
- Burn human bodies in holes dug in a swampy plain which is frozen in January where it rains and snows constantly and there is mud everywhere;
- (what did they do when it was raining?)
- Kill people with poisoned soft drinks;
- Shoot 135,000 people in Smolensk and bury them Katyn-style;
- Shoot 200,000 people in the Lisenitz forest;
- Using the same methods of concealment they used at Katyn, etc. etc.?

**See also:**

- Book Reviews: <http://www.cwporter.com/bkrew.html>
- Barbara Kulaska (defender of Ernst Zündel) on "NOT GUILTY AT NUREMBERG", 1992:

<http://www.cwporter.com/kulaska.htm>

**Q: Did this ironical approach work?**

**Porter:** In a sense it worked perfectly, because there is no possible answer. The only way to deal with that kind of thing - if you want to consider Nuremberg valid law at all -- is simply to ignore the whole book. So it has been ignored. Apart from one or two ridiculous and mendacious attempts to "explain" the use of "atomic bombs to exterminate Jews at Auschwitz" (for example, <http://www.h-ref.de/literatur/r/remer/zeit-luegt.php>), the book has been almost entirely ignored. They can't answer it, so they pretend it doesn't exist. In that way it failed.

"Ken McVay OBC", according to his own website, a self-proclaimed [homosexual paedophile activist](#) and anti-"hater", has been aware of all this documentation for 12 - 15 years. They don't care. Our enemies are not interested in the truth. They believe they have a "right" to lie.

**Q: Furthermore it seems that tons of the original Holocaust accounts (soap, lamp shades, electric plates,...) on which we were examined in school now go unaccounted for.**

**Porter:** You mean the original documents have all disappeared, and in most cases there is no proof that the original documents ever even existed? That is correct. There are lovely "texts" to quote, but no original document. Look at the "Bullet Order" (<http://www.cwporter.com/ps1650.html>). The document is illegible, so where did the "official translation" come from? Answer: they translated it first, then forged the document afterwards. Even then it is a botch. All the main documents are like this: worthless. Of course, if it's an accusation nobody cares about, like "manipulating the currency in Iran", then you get a very nice document, with signatures and all sorts of goodies. But even then, in most cases, the original has disappeared. I also reproduced dozens of documents from Jean-Claude Pressac (for example, <http://www.cwporter.com/undocs.htm> and <http://www.cwporter.com/verg.htm>).

**Q: Your second book 'Not Guilty at Nuremberg' furthermore dug up some of the official court documents. What was your final conclusion: necessary justice or mere *Siegerjustiz* in which the conqueror enslaves his conquered lands?**

**Porter:** N.G., or *Not Guilty At Nuremberg*, available in six **eight** languages including Portuguese and Spanish **[and now Russian and Roumanian]**, was an attempt to outline the defense arguments and point out any legal irregularities not covered by M.I.R.T.H. *Made In Russia - The Holocaust*,

with approximately 1,000 references. There was no conclusion; it was just an outline. **Not Guilty at Nuremberg** in Spanish is available in good Spanish in book form. <http://www.cwporter.com/innocent.htm>,

**Q: What were the driving forces and goals behind these projects?**

**Porter:** You mean the trials? To continue the war by other means. They even said so. Robert Jackson said so. Justice Douglas of the US Supreme Court said these trials were a matter of "naked political power". Source: 1966 Collier's Encyclopedia, *War Crimes Trials*.

Incidentally, the whole concept of postwar reparations and war crimes trials was invented by two Jews from the World Jewish Congress BEFORE THE ALLEGED HOLOCAUST EVEN STARTED (source: THE JEWISH PARADOX by Nahum Goldman, Grosset and Dunlap, pp. 122-124; you have to read between the lines a little bit). The original idea was to milk the Germans because the crybaby heebies "lost their property" and so on. They had a financial incentive to invent atrocities -- while millions of others died, in a war THEY declared, on March 24, 1933, for the first time, and repeatedly thereafter. Wars are Jews' harvests.



**Q: You also made a comparison with the other alleged war crimes of the 20th century. Is there a consistent line? Can a comparison between Japanese, Serb, German, Israeli,... war crimes be made?**

**Porter:** As far as I know, there are no exceptions. Nuremberg is not valid law, and none of these trials have any value whatsoever. Look at Serbia. Clinton bombs the hell out of Afghanistan, Serbia and Irak to distract attention from Monica Lewinski, so Milosovic is a "war criminal"! I admire Milosovic: he treated the Hague court with the contempt which it deserves and is defending himself very well, acting as his own lawyer. Lawyers are useless in these things: they are not aggressive enough. I had one, and he quit before I could fire him.

**Q: In 1998 you were convicted before a German court to a certain amount. Could you fill us in on the details?**

**Porter:** On April 25, 1995, a former member of the Wehrmacht (not the SS), Reinhold Elstner, burnt himself to death at the Feldhernhalle in Munich to protest what he called the "Niagara of lies" flooding over Germany.

The Munich police actually had the shamelessness to arrest people for placing wreathes on the spot and to remove all the burn marks with a blow torch.

In protest, I sent over 200 copies of Nicht Schuldig in Nurnberg. ([www.cwporter.com/nggerm.htm](http://www.cwporter.com/nggerm.htm)) to Germany, with a protest letter, one to every important newspaper, magazine and politician in the country, to Helmut Kohl, Richard Weizäcker and five others by registered mail, to make sure they got it.

The Mayor of Munich, Christian Ude, got his knickers in a twist and the result was 17 months of so-called "legal proceedings", during which I told them more or less to bugger off. Of course, I was polite about it: I said, ["I defy your authority and I refuse"](#)

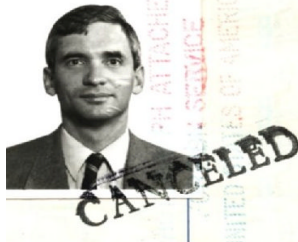
[to comply with any order to do anything.](#)" In the end, they dropped it.



**"Reinhold Elstner, 25 April 1995:  
Your Death is Our Beacon of Hope"**

**Q: We were told you are a stateless person.**

**Porter:** I have been a stateless person since November 8, 1984, that is correct.



**Stateless Carlos Porter's passport**

**Q: Is the newly installed European extradition arrest a threat to you, as it is to Siegfried Verbeke?**

**Porter:** The whole concept of unilaterally declared universal jurisdiction is illegal and unworkable. What I want to know is, whose laws take precedence? If Mexico claimed that Mexican law applied in Guatemala, and Guatemala claimed that Guatemalan law applied in Mexico, the result would be a war, after which the victor would impose its own laws on the vanquished. Are Israel and Germany going to go to war against the whole world?

Or is a worldwide dictatorship (for example, the so-called "EEC") going to rewrite all the world's laws so they are all the same? That's what they want, actually; in the crazy-house of the EEC, it is considered a huge problem if the rims on plastic cups in Denmark are different from the rims on plastic cups in, say, Italy; same with taps, faucets, and everything else in existence. I've translated all their junk, I know what they're up to. The whole SYSTEM is a threat to me. It's a threat to everybody in the world.

**Q: Who are rather what inspired you to become a holocaust revisionist "holocaust denier" in the judeo-Orwellian sense?**

**Porter:** No comment, except that the concept of "denial" is very revealing psychologically. It's also a semantic trick.

**Q: What makes you withstand the repression, whereas thousands of others would already have given up?**

**Porter:** I am astonished at the assumption that I have done anything extraordinary at all. What are we afraid of? What can they do to us? Are they going to burn us at the stake? Are they going to burn a hole in our tongues with a red-hot iron? Are they going to put us to work felling timber at 60 degrees below zero in the Arctic Circle 14 hours a day for 20 years and then shoot us in the back of the head? The witchcraft mania of the Middle Ages lasted 500 years; Communism lasted 70 years, and reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated.

**Q: How do you see the future of historical revisionism evolving?**

**Porter:** Assuming that revisionism represents the truth, which I believe is the case, it will continue, regardless of what happens to any individual revisionist. It's like the Copernican system of astronomy. We have only scratched the surface, and it only just beginning. Did the science of astronomy come to an end with Copernicus, just because the astronomers of the 16th century ran out of ideas or didn't have a Hubble Telescope?

**Q: I think Faurisson once stated: "the future belongs to revisionism, alas not to the revisionists", implying that the war on the publication level would be won, but that the state and its judeo-liberal class would do anything**

**to prevent dissident shaping.**

**Porter:** Even that's not true. There are limits to what they can do, or are willing to do – so far. In Elizabethan England, dissidents actually had their hands, ears and/or noses cut off. Titus Oates [actually, I was thinking of William Prynne] had his ears cut off, in several bits, right down to the nub; one of the Protestant martyrs was burnt at the stake at Smithfield in front of his wife and 10 children. European jails are relatively comfortable. So far. As things stand now, if they want to torture you, they have to say you're a Moslem.

**Q: One of the more recent evolutions we sense in the revisionist movement is that of a certain fatigue: almost everything has already been written to a certain extent, so we see renowned revisionists applying their wit and technique on other more recent events: Zundel on 9/11, Irving on current affairs, etc.**

**Porter:** Living on the same planet with the Jews is like living with a brat that throws tantrums. They never engage in logical analysis or factual argument; they just turn up the volume on their temper tantrums: 100 decibels, 200 decibels, 400, a thousand, a million... In the end, either you puke up and kill them or you get out of the house. It is unrealistic to expect the same people to go on having original ideas year after year. Most people are lucky to have one original idea, just one. The Leuchter Report was an original idea; the Rudolf Report was an original idea, somewhat less so; the Ball Report was entirely original. So was the Richard Krege Report (ground radar at Treblinka). Just because we've run out of ideas personally doesn't mean the whole process will come to a halt. It's like the famous, perhaps apocryphal, story of a proposition to abolish the US Patent Office in the mid-1880s on the grounds that "everything had already been invented". I actually remember people talking about "post-revisionism", on the grounds that "everything had been said", as early as 15 years ago, in Brussels, in 1989! That's ridiculous.

**Q: Do you follow these steps also?**

**Porter:** Yes. The universe is a unified whole. I have written many articles on subjects other than gas chambers: interest rates, exchange rates, the money supply, central banking, slavery, the Confederacy, Communism, Catholicism, abortion, the Gulf War, Rhodesia and South Africa, La Guerra de las Malvinas, the I.R.A., Cuba, the philosophy of Ayn Rand, etc. But the fact remains that the ONLY thing people care about is the existence or non-existence of the gas chambers. Other things are actually more important, but they don't care.

**Q: Is it wise that revisionists take certain political points of view, given the already repeated portrayal in the media as "Neo-nazi nuts"?**

**Porter:** The evidence for the genocide of the Jews is probably 75% Communist propaganda. Just look at the footnotes in almost any book on the subject. Does that mean our enemies are Communists?

**Q: What are your future projects?**

**Porter:** Maybe I'll be shot in the head getting on a train. Unfortunate accident. Of course, the police have to make split-second decisions, you know.

**Q: Any closing remarks from your side?**

**Porter:** See <http://irelandsown.net>. Why should we be afraid if nobody else is?

Disclaimer: I am anti-Communist. What interests me here is not all their Marxist-Leninist rubbish, but the dedication, and some, but not all, of the methods, of Irish nationalists historically.

**Q: Thanks for your answering of these questions!**

If you would have any further comments or suggestions, please be so kind to contact us at:

<http://www.bbet.org> (site in Dutch, but good "links" page in English) (Update: Site closed by Belgian pigniks in summer or fall of 2006)

Kind regards, Alexei, 6 OCTOBER 2005

See also: An Irishman Objects to Irish Republican Link:

<http://www.cwporter.com/letter22.htm>

The Dilemma of Revisionism:

<http://www.cwporter.com/gasnot.htm>

## Look who's talking!

Lynn Barber, *The Observer*, Sunday 14 April 2002

Whether it's backing Dubya's war against terrorism or sticking the knife into the Queen Mum, you can always rely on Christopher Hitchens to say the unsayable. Lynn Barber enjoys a long lunch with the authentic voice of dissent

There is always something terribly nostalgic about the sight of Christopher Hitchens - *The Hitch* - on one of his periodic forays to London. You would think that 20 years living in the States would have smoothed him down, tidied him up, but no - he still dresses like a scruff and talks like a toff, he still chain smokes and drinks far too much, he still orders vast meals and fails to eat them. He is one of the few remaining practitioners of the five-hour, two-bottle lunch.

I know because I shared one with him. The waiters were laying tables for dinner by the time we left - but by then they were in thrall to his charm.

He charms everyone, that's why it's so funny finding him, in *Letters to a Young Contrarian* (2001), claiming that: 'The concept of loneliness and exile and self-sufficiency continually bucks me up.' If he seriously thinks of himself as a lonely outsider, he must be well detached from reality. His best friends are Martin Amis, Julian Barnes, James Fenton, Salman Rushdie and Francis Wheen; his ex-girlfriends include Anna Wintour - this is not the stuff of pariah-dom. In fact it is hard to imagine any social circle in which he would be unwelcome - possibly some dim Cheshire golf club or Freemasons' lodge, but, even there, give him half an hour talking...

Talking - preferably arguing - is what he does compulsively, brilliantly, all the time. Martin Amis recalls that when he went out to Cyprus to be best man at Hitchens' first wedding in 1980, he would spend his mornings lazing by the pool, whereas *The Hitch* would appear mid-morning in a suit and go straight to the bar to find someone to argue with. He won't allow anything to interfere with a good argument; that's why he sits down to meals and then never eats them. He admits that, 'Between talking and eating it would be a hard day in hell before I would eat rather than talk.'

He must surely be one of the greatest conversationalists of our age. His only rival among people I've met or interviewed is Gore Vidal, and Vidal has jokingly appointed Hitchens his successor. Both of them are wits as opposed to raconteurs - ie stimulants rather than soporifics. Both of them talk as they write - or write as they talk, I'm never sure which comes first - in long, glistening, polished sentences, often with the jokes dropped casually in parentheses. They often adopt each other's mots. Was it Gore or Hitch who first said, 'I am a stranger to all forms of modesty, including the false' or who advised other writers always to keep their high horses tethered conveniently within reach?

Hitchens was in London this time to talk in an Orange Word debate with his friend Francis Wheen. Wheen asked me beforehand if I could try to keep him sober, or at least deliver him to the theatre sober-ish at six. He said last time Hitch did a debate he was rude to the audience. I relayed this news to Hitchens as he ordered the first of his three pre-prandial double malt whiskeys at opening time in the French pub. 'Oh balls. I'm beginning to get very bored with the way people go on about my drinking. The fact that at the last debate I was rude to a member of the audience was nothing to do with the booze. A gentleman is never rude except on purpose - I can honestly be nasty sober, believe you me.'

I could not do what I do, and teach a class, and never miss a deadline, never be late for anything if I was a lush, OK? I would really love to read a piece that said, "He is not a lush."

That would be fabulous, it would be a first, I could show it to people and say, "Look!"

OK, OK - Christopher Hitchens is not a lush. And in fact the tapes of our lunch could be offered as proof: you can hear my questions getting increasingly slurred, boring and repetitious, while his answers remain perfectly lucid, coherent and courteous. So, all I can say is that he does drink an awful lot but it doesn't seem to affect him in the slightest. It certainly hasn't stopped him being one of the most prolific, as well as brilliant, journalists of our time. He writes regular columns for *The Nation* (an American left-wing weekly) and *Vanity Fair*; he writes long articles for both the *New York* and the *London Review of Books*; he has published 10 books, of which the two most recent are *Unacknowledged Legislation* (2000) on literature and *Letters to a Young Contrarian* (2001) on politics; he gives speeches, lectures and debates, and teaches one term a year at the New School for Social Research, in New York. He also travels the world to report on foreign affairs and tries to visit at least one 'difficult' country a year, often at his own expense. He has been shot at in Sarajevo and jailed in Czechoslovakia. Even now, at 52, when he could decently retire to armchair punditry, he still likes to 'get the smell of a place' before he writes about it.

He describes himself as an essayist and a 'contrarian', which is the term he prefers to dissident, or its patronising alternatives, maverick or loose cannon. In his twenties, he was a signed-up Trotskyite - he remembers cold Saturday mornings selling *Socialist Worker* in Kilburn, and fretful days on picket lines. He joined the International Socialist Party when it was just five men and a dog, and felt vindicated by the Paris events of 1968. He says everyone should have that feeling, just once in their lives, of being right. He remained a socialist even after his move to the States in 1980 and right through to the collapse of communism in 1989.

But now he no longer calls himself a socialist - though he says he still misses it like an amputated limb - his politics henceforth must be 'à la carte'. Bill Clinton cured him of any belief that you should concentrate on issues and ignore personalities, 'because Clinton could change his mind on any issue, but he couldn't change the fact that he was a scumbag'. Clinton was one of his regular targets in the 90s, as was Kissinger - but he also fired fusillades at Mother Teresa and Princess Diana. But recently he has amazed everyone - left, right, centre - by coming out firmly in support of Bush's war on terrorism. This means that for the first time in his life he is in the unfamiliar position of swimming with the tide. But on the other hand it hasn't made him revise his first impression of Dubya - 'Eyes so close together he could use a monocle, abnormally unintelligent, could barely read at all, "rescued from the booze by Jesus" - and if there's one sentence that would piss me off more than any other, that's it. But one can look on the bright side and say it proves that anyone can be president.'

Is this a sign that he's moving rightwards? Could he end up like Paul Johnson, or indeed like his brother Peter Hitchens, who used to be an international socialist and now writes hang 'em flog 'em columns for the *Mail* on Sunday? 'Well, I don't mind if people think that I am moving rightwards. It's an accusation that would once have stung me more than it does now. But as to ending up like Paul Johnson - no, I'm incapable of doing that. The profile of the defector, the turncoat, is that they repudiate everything they've ever done. I don't do that.'

When I look back on what I did for the left, I'm in a small way quite proud of some of it - I only wish I'd done more.'

His best friend Martin Amis believes The Hitch's big turning point came in the late- 80s when: 'He had a full-scale midlife crisis, involving divorce, death of parent, etc. And I think that the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of socialism, was for him a maturing event. As a result, his prose really became, I think, freer. Because, up till then, I felt, he was always putting his fists up to protect the left and that constrained him.'

It is interesting that Martin Amis links Hitch's personal midlife crisis and political crisis in this way, given that he, Christopher Hitchens and Peter Hitchens his brother, all warned me against trying to 'psychologise' Hitchens' politics. They said, in effect, 'Don't try to make out that he became a leftie because he had an unhappy childhood or something.' As if I would be so crude! Anyway, he had a perfectly conventional childhood - though it had its undercurrents, as we shall see.

Surprisingly - given how much he writes - Christopher Hitchens has written only one autobiographical piece, the title essay of Prepared for the Worst (1988). It is self-revealing as far as it goes, but it covers only one small aspect of his life, the discovery of his Jewishness when he was 38. It happened when his brother Peter took his new bride to meet their maternal grandmother, Dodo, who was then in her nineties, and Dodo said, 'She's Jewish, isn't she?' and then announced: 'Well, I've got something to tell you. So are you.' She said that her real surname was Levin, not Lynn, and that her ancestors were Blumenthals from Poland.

Christopher was thrilled when Peter told him. By then he was living in Washington and most of his friends were Jewish. Moreover, he felt that he had somehow known all along. He remembers an odd dream in which he was on the deck of a ship and a group of men approached him and said they needed a 10th man to make up a minyan (Jewish prayer group) and he calmly strolled across the deck and joined them. He insists that he is Jewish - because Jewish descent goes through the mother - though Peter Hitchens, who has traced the family tree, says they are only one 32nd Jewish. But wasn't it odd of his mother not to tell him - or even tell his father? 'I'm practically certain I know her motivation. Dodo had had quite a thin time in the hat business and encountered some prejudice. She looked Jewish, whereas my mother didn't. And I'm sure she didn't want me to go through any of that - her plan for me was that I was to be an English gentleman - you can judge for yourself how well that worked out!'

I'd say it worked out pretty well. Superficially, Hitchens is almost a parody of an English gentleman: you know he went to public school as soon as he opens his mouth. But he was the first Hitchens to do so. His father came from quite a poor family but worked his way up through the naval ranks, 'had a good war' and ended up a commander. Martin Amis remembers Commander Hitchens as 'impressive, barrel-chested, white poloneck jersey, very much the ex-naval man, with his pipe'. But after the war, he retired on a small pension and became a school bursar. Christopher admired him, but also felt sorry for him: 'He had been very brave indeed in the war. His ship sank the Scharnhorst. I have not done as good a day's work as that in my life - I have never sunk a Nazi battleship. But ever since then it had been sliding downhill, small jobs, keeping the books - he was an accountant, basically. And he'd been brought up in the slump and employment, austerity, then a war, then a fair bit more austerity and a long struggle to bring up the kids - he never had a chance for much joie de vivre.'

Christopher sensed early on that his parents were ill-matched: his mother Yvonne was pretty, sociable, vivacious; his father reserved. He believes they only stayed together for the sake of the children and he wishes they hadn't. When he was about seven, he remembers sitting on the stairs in his pyjamas hearing his parents arguing about his education - his father saying they couldn't afford to send him to private school, his mother saying they must: 'If there is going to be an upper class in this country, then Christopher is going to be in it.' Soon afterwards he was sent away to boarding school, which suited him fine - he was glad to get away from home.

He flourished at prep school and then at the Leys, Cambridge. His obvious talent in the debating society led to suggestions that he might become a lawyer, but he remembers reading a piece by James Cameron that said being a journalist allowed you to 'swim in every ocean and make love in every continent' and he decided that was the job for him. He read PPE at Balliol and shared digs with poet James Fenton. He braved taunts of 'champagne socialist' to attend parties at All Souls, wearing the dinner jacket his mother had given him as his going-to-Oxford present. His degree was a disappointment - a third - but it didn't matter because he had already won a travelling scholarship to America. Soon after he returned, Fenton wangled him a job on the New Statesman.

But there were two very strange and unsettling postscripts to his childhood. The second chronologically was the discovery of his Jewishness. But the first - which he has never written about - was his mother's suicide. While he was at Oxford he became aware that his parents had quietly separated - he saw his mother walking down the high street with a man carrying her shopping bags, and afterwards she told him she was living with this man and what did he think? He made encouraging noises - he wanted his mother to be happy - but didn't pay much attention.

In 1973 he had a phone call from his father asking if he knew where his mother was, because her passport was missing. He said he didn't. A few days later he was in bed with a new girlfriend when the phone rang and it was an old girlfriend asking if he was all right. He said yes, fine. Because, she said, there was a story in The Times that a woman with his mother's name had been murdered by her lover in a hotel in Athens. 'So I went out and got the paper and there it was.' He contacted the police and then flew out to Athens to identify the body - he was taken to the hotel room where it happened. The police at first believed it was murder, because there was blood everywhere. But then they found a suicide note addressed to Christopher, saying, in effect, 'You will understand one day.' Apparently, the couple had made a suicide pact and had both taken pills, but the man had also slit his throat and wrists. Hitchens believes that his mother had come to her senses at some stage and tried to ring for help, but there was no response.

After a long police inquiry, he buried the bodies in Athens and brought the effects home. He had to take the man's effects to his family - an ex-wife and daughter - 'and they weren't particularly pleased to see me'. He found out later that the lover was a defrocked priest with a history of manic depression. He believes that he must have talked his mother into the suicide pact. 'She probably thought things were getting sordid - he wasn't able to hold a job down, she couldn't go back, she was probably about the age I am now and perhaps there was that - she'd been very pretty - and things were never going to get any better, so why go through with it? She might not have been that hard to persuade, but I know that she did try to save herself because I have the



photographs still. So that was sort of the end of family life really.'

Martin Amis wrote him a sympathetic letter and that was the start of their friendship. Hitchens says: 'You only really need one friend, who is your counterpart, who knows everything about you, and that's Martin. Martin is the one that I love, who means everything to me.' Amis, in turn, says he loves Hitchens because, 'He's incredibly funny, and he instructs as he delights.' He also says Hitchens is an incomparably good friend - 'Having him for a friend during bad times is like having 100 friends - he'd do anything for you.' They consoled each other through their respective divorces and mid-life crises and loss of their fathers; Amis was best man at Hitchens's first wedding and Hitchens at Amis's second; Hitchens (the atheist) is godfather to Amis's son, Jacob.

Hitchens always envied Amis's closeness to his family - he regards his own family as finished. He rarely sees his younger brother Peter; in fact the standing joke for years was that Christopher and Peter Hitchens were really the same person, because they were never photographed together and their voices sounded identical on the phone. Peter is a Christian reactionary and advocate of 'family values', who fulminates in the Mail on Sunday about homosexuality, divorce, single mothers, sexual permissiveness, pornography - all the usual targets.

Peter seems fonder of Christopher than Christopher of him. Christopher told me that if he and his wife Carol were killed, he knows that Peter would look after their daughter, Antonia - whereas he would not do the same for Peter's children. 'I can't be a hypocrite about it. I'm sure he would, but I wouldn't.' And anyway, Peter would want his children to be brought up as Christians. This, Christopher claims, is the really important difference between them - 'Politically, the differences are trivial, but I have a bigger difference between myself and anyone who believes in any religion than I do on any other subject. I don't trust anyone who believes in religion. So we don't agree.'

Hitchens claims to believe in Einstein's injunction to 'remember your humanity and forget the rest'. But once in a while he throws up these steel barricades marked 'principles' or 'not being a hypocrite' behind which he can behave with truly Trotskyite ruthlessness. This was most apparent when he attacked - some would say betrayed - his old friend Sidney Blumenthal in 1999. Blumenthal worked for the White House and testified in the Lewinsky hearings that he had never tried to smear Lewinsky as a stalker. Hitchens said not so; he remembered a lunch in which Blumenthal had done precisely that, and he went and signed an affidavit to that effect.

In theory he could have sent Blumenthal to prison for perjury: it was a sharp end to a long friendship. Some of Hitchens's friends were so shocked they dropped him. He says he doesn't know precise figures, but: 'There are people I realise I haven't heard from and there may be many more I haven't guessed at. For example, when I was at Hay last year, I recognised Richard Ford on the lawn so I just drifted over to say hi. And he ignored me, grimly. So I don't know how many - but, I hope, a lot. Put it this way: I don't want it to be over, I'm afraid of it blowing over. Because I should have pulled the chain on him [Blumenthal] much earlier than I did - there was a long period when I was a hypocrite, when I thought I could

still think of him as a friend.' In fact, the Blumenthal affair was strikingly reminiscent of Martin Amis's sudden termination of his friendship with Julian Barnes. Perhaps that is why they over-sentimentalise their own friendship.

When I pressed Martin Amis to name Hitchens's faults, he said: 'Let me think. He's quite tough, you know, steely. He perhaps is a bit rough in argument sometimes, rougher than I would be. And he'll give a waiter or a cab driver a pasting (if they were disobliging), in a way that I wouldn't. He's physically brave, too.' Hitchens would be happy with this verdict: he admires toughness. He sometimes regrets that he is the first male Hitchens not to have been in the armed services and thinks maybe that is why he seeks out dangerous places like Beirut or Belfast or Bosnia.

'I remember once, it would have been about 1978, I wrote a long piece from Beirut for the New Statesman and my father rang me up - he used to pretend he didn't read the New Statesman, but I later found he used to give a subscription as a Christmas present to his friends - and said, "Read your piece on Beirut. I thought it was very good." I said, "Well thank you!" because I didn't get much of that - nor did I miss it, or want it, or I didn't know that I did, anyway. Then he said, rather gruffly, "I also thought it was rather brave of you to go there," and hung up the phone. I had never expected to hear anything like that from him, because he'd been in Arctic Convoys. I'd always thought I'd rather disappointed him by not being good at cricket or rugby. So it was an amazing unsought compliment. But then I thought to myself, "Maybe that's what I have been secretly wanting, to have that validation."'

Right at the end of *Letters to a Young Contrarian*, Hitchens confesses to 'a slight sense of imposture' and quotes James Cameron, saying that every time he sat at his typewriter he thought, 'Today is the day they are going to find me out.' Find him out as what, though? What is the imposture? Believe me, I was looking for it - some chink between words and actions that I could burrow into and say, Aha! But, actually, the more I looked, the more impressed I was by his sincerity. He does plough quite a lonely furrow; he does keep banging on about thankless subjects like Cyprus or Northern Ireland; he does make frequent and dangerous trips to uncomfortable countries, not just newsworthy war zones, but nasty, dreary hell-holes like North Korea. It's true he writes for money - for Vanity Fair - but he also writes for no-hoper leftie reviews and small publishers simply because he wants to get the stuff out. Perhaps his sense of imposture is the one all writers have - that they care more about writing than they do about their subject. This is something non-writers can never imagine, because they always think of writing as a chore. But Hitchens is never happier than when writing: 'Some people feel that they have to write - it's not a choice, or a preference, it's a determination. I've been very lucky - that's the thing I can't get over - that I can make my living from doing the only thing I like and the only thing I can do. Writing is recreational for me, I'm unhappy when I'm not doing it.' A pleasure for him, then, and a pleasure for his readers. If that's his idea of imposture, I think we can forgive him.

• ***Letters to a Young Contrarian*** by Christopher Hitchens is published by Perseus Press, £16.99

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## The Archaeology of Postmodernity, Part III: Transvestism in Music

E. R. E. Knutsson, December 27, 2009

The Austrian statesman **Clemens von Metternich** once declared that the Orient started southeast of the city walls

of Vienna. Western Europe's centuries-long confrontation with Oriental empires helped define Central Europe as a cultural

and historical frontier region. **The experience of imperial subjugation and multi-ethnicity** — an Eastern European patchwork of ethnic groups with different languages, cultures, and traditions living closely together — became essential parts of the Central European historical experience.



**Schloss Schönbrunn, Vienna**

The allegiance of Jews to the institutions of the Habsburg monarchy was largely motivated by the dynastic program of the Habsburgs, who maintained that their own interests transcended the narrow concerns of specific ethnic, religious, or national groups in their multinational empire.

Emperor **Joseph II**'s Patent of Tolerance in 1781 marked the beginning of the formal, political emancipation of the Jews. This process was further fueled by the revolutions of 1848, and was formally completed in 1867 when the Austrian and Hungarian constitutions established the principle of equality for all citizens. Robert Wistrich **points out** that by 1907, "there was already a Jewish National Club in the Austrian Parliament, where Jewish deputies represented explicitly Jewish interests — the kind of separatist Jewish politics which did not exist anywhere in the western world."

No wonder, then, that the Jews of Austria, regardless of social class, religious views, or level of modernization, "were *Habsburg-treu* (loyal to the dynasty) in the late nineteenth century," as noted by **Marsha Rozenblit**:

**The Jews ... tended to identify themselves as Austrians rather than as members of the German nation. Jewish spokesmen emphasized the Austrian identity of Jews. ... They understood that the supra-national empire best served them as a bulwark against the narrow chauvinism and anti-Semitism of the national camps.**

Nevertheless, despite their allegiance to the monarchy, Jews retained a strong national identity as Jews. **Joseph Samuel Bloch**, the Galician-born Viennese rabbi and parliamentary deputy who tirelessly fought anti-Semitism, provides an excellent example of such behavior. According to Rozenblit:

**[Bloch] was no Zionist, yet as early as the 1880s he wanted his newspaper to 'rouse a feeling of kinship among all who belonged to the Jewish race and to make them conscious of their inescapable fate, as well as at the same time arousing a noble pride in their common past'. He urged the founding of a defence organization against anti-Semitism in 1884 (the Union had been founded in 1886) which would 'elevate and foster Jewish consciousness (*Stammesbewusstsein*)'.**

As Anthony Alofsin **points out**, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was "a collage of so many nationalities that it could never be transformed into a unified nation-state." Within this collage, Jews achieved cultural preeminence. As Robert S. Wistrich **points out**,

**In 1900, Gustav Mahler was the leading conductor and composer in the city, Karl Kraus its high priest of satire, Arthur Schnitzler its outstanding playwright, Adolf von Sonnenthal its greatest actor. The founder of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, Victor Adler, was a 'Protestant' Jew and many of his leading associates were middle-class Jewish intellectuals. Sigmund Freud had just published his epoch-making *Interpretation of Dreams* and psychoanalysis was about to be born.**

Waiting in the wings were such central figures of twentieth-century culture as Arnold Schoenberg, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Buber and Franz Kafka, not to mention writers like Joseph Roth, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Felix Salten, Stefan Zweig and Peter Altenberg — all of them of Jewish origin.

The result was, says **Wistrich**, a multi-ethno-cultural encounter that "proved to be a cradle of modernism and post-modernism in the arts and sciences":

**The fact that in the *versunkene Welt* (sunken world) of 1900 most of high culture was 'Jewish' did not prevent the emergence of a crude, atavistic, tribal nationalism which would eventually culminate in the *Anschluss* less than four decades later and the destruction of Austrian Jewry. Indeed, the brilliance of the Jewish achievement in fin-de-siècle Vienna ... was undoubtedly a contributing factor to the tragic end.**

**Schoenberg: Rome vs Jerusalem — Judea vs Germania?**

**Alexander Ringer** points out, perhaps defensively, that "as long as familiarity with New England transcendentalism or American individualism is considered indispensable for a meaningful appraisal of **Charles Ives** and his particular mission, Arnold Schoenberg, his exact contemporary and eventual fellow American, deserves equally serious attention in equivalent Jewish terms."

In this context, the significance of Schoenberg's "antirational" view of art and his personal experiences with anti-Semitism in the early 1920s has been **emphasized**:

**His acknowledgement that he could not escape his Jewish heritage initiated a protracted period of reflection upon Jewish issues from both theological and political points of view culminating in the early 1930s with yet another attempt to give a comprehensive statement of his position by means of words and music — this time in his opera *Moses and Aron*, which presents his personal vision of Judaism.**

The moment of truth is usually believed to have come in 1921, when he was asked for his certificate of baptism (to prove that he was not a Jew) while on holiday in Mattsee, near Salzburg (Austria). Schoenberg explicitly articulated his identification with a classically Jewish perspective and declared himself "no longer a European" but a Jew, in a letter to the painter **Wassily Kandinsky** written in 1923:

**For I have at last learnt the lesson that has been forced upon me during this year, and I shall not ever forget it. It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being (at least, the Europeans prefer the worst of their race to me), but I am a Jew. I am content that it should be so! Today I no longer wish to be an exception; I have no objection at all to being lumped together with all the rest. ... We are two kinds of people. Definitely!**

Schoenberg's statements of an explicitly Zionist position begin in 1924, when he, according to **Nicholas Cook**, "argued that only military victory could secure a Jewish state in Palestine against its enemies." In *The Biblical Way* (1926) he presented his belief in the necessity of an exodus of European Jewry in the form of a psychodrama.

In a letter of 13 June 1933, after Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Schoenberg declared: **"It is necessary to give up all Western acquisitions; we are Asians and nothing essential binds us to the West. ... We must return to our origins."**

A few weeks later, Schoenberg stated that he planned "a long tour of America, which could perhaps turn into a world tour, to persuade people to help the Jews in Germany." He explains that he considers this more important than his art, and that he is determined "to do nothing in the future but work for the Jewish national cause." On another occasion during the same year he states it explicitly: **"I offer the sacrifice of my art for the sake of Jewry."**

According to **William E. Benjamin**, "there is no doubt that personal experiences of anti-Semitism in the years immediately following [World War I] played a role,

though they seem only to have accelerated developments already taking place in [Schoenberg's] psyche."



**Arnold Schoenberg**

Although Schoenberg — whose ancestry included both rabbis and cantors — for a period of time discarded the Jewish faith for Lutheran Protestantism, the proximity of his ideas to Jewish theological thought remained obvious. Adorno had a point when he asserted that Schoenberg translated the Old Testament ban on images into music: Dissonance — defined as form divorced from imitation of external nature — can be seen as a revitalization of the Jewish ban on images. The need to change forms of expression in art is absolutely necessary in order to fulfill the old Jewish prohibition on images. As William E. Benjamin points out,

**Schoenberg realized that Judaism provided a historical model for what he was attempting as an artist. He came to see that the Jewish concept of law — as mediation between an unknowable God and the task of constructing a meaningful social existence — offered a parallel, on a grand scale, for his efforts to devise a method of pitch organization that could mediate between the idea of a piece — an intricate web of tonal relationships that appeared to him instantaneously and as a unit — and the listener's need to follow a musical argument over time.**

From the early 1920s, Schoenberg was, according to **Gottfried Boehm**, "committed to an uncompromising Hebraic monotheism through which he sought to legitimize his modernist experiment in musical expression." **Robert Wistrich** emphasizes the "connection between Schoenberg's musical agenda, his Jewish identity and the commitment to a Jewish national renewal (by returning to the essence of ancient Judaism)": "The Mosaic aversion to idolatry, to visible symbols and mystery, as well as the Judaic call for the triumph of rational consciousness, are harnessed by Schoenberg to the cause of twentieth-century modernist expressionism."

In Judaism, as in Islam, "**it was sacrilegious to make a figurative representation of God. With very few exceptions, there were no Jewish painters before the Russian artist Marc Chagall, who had to come to Paris to paint.**"

**Gleichgewichtsstörung: The Schoenberg-Kandinsky-Tango**

Schoenberg's friendship and cooperation with the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky — a philosemite who was erroneously listed as a Jew in the *Grosse Jüdische National-Biographie* (1929) — underscores the importance of the blurring of boundaries between art forms, as well as the underlying, religiously motivated, "aniconic" (i.e., without icons) or "iconoclastic" thematic structure. Music meant a great deal to Kandinsky; he referred to his own paintings as "compositions," and became deeply interested in

Schoenberg's attempts to establish correspondences between musical tones and colors, and in his rejection of traditional tonal and harmonic patterns.

A new kind of transvestism among the arts was thus born:

**We see, for example, a painter who wrote an opera libretto (Kokoschka), a poet who composed music (Pound), and a composer who painted pictures (Schoenberg). It is as if artistic talent were a kind of libido, an electricity that could discharge itself with equal success in a poem, a sonata, or a sculpture. Throughout the modernist movement, the major writers and composers both enforced and transgressed the boundaries among the various arts with unusual energy — almost savage at times.**

As Christian Meyer, director of the Arnold Schoenberg Center in Vienna, **points out:**

**The first decade of the twentieth century saw an almost simultaneous musical and visual revolution. Because of Schoenberg's innovations, musicians were freed from the system of tempered tonality. At the same time, painters, especially Kandinsky, broke away from the system of central perspective and figural representation. These traditions had been legitimated for centuries by an overwhelming number of masterpieces and were so universally sanctioned that they had come to be regarded as the unquestioned essence of both arts. This explains the anarchist energy that had to be unleashed to liberate music and painting from the bonds of tradition, and at the same time it illuminates the "atonal character" of pre-World War I painting in Europe, which reflects this revolution. While Schoenberg's music was an inspiration to Kandinsky as he explored abstraction, today Kandinsky's paintings function as ambassadors for Schoenberg's musical works. The strong colorful essence of Kandinsky's prewar works has the same richness of sound colors in Schoenberg's compositions.**

Schoenberg approved of Kandinsky's *Der gelbe Klang* with its "ungraspable" dimension, comparing it to his own *Die glückliche Hand*. Kandinsky explained to Schoenberg that *Der gelbe Klang* was based on the anti-geometrical type of construction attained "by the 'principle' of dissonance." Referring to the Ten Commandments in a letter to Schoenberg, he emphasized the power of negation and the difference between the law as a sign (word) and its signified (the meaning of the law). Kandinsky broke the link between the sign and a transcendental linguistic signified and hence equated art with reality. As with Schoenberg, the artistic form is conceived as pure perception — independent of external references.

Kandinsky and Schoenberg viewed their urge to change forms of expression as motivated by the desire to comply with the ancient Jewish prohibition against images. The old Jewish prohibition on images is characterized by its ability to uphold a separation between the pictorial and its referent, that is, the difference between the sign and what it signifies. **Gottfried Boehm** has emphasized the logic of concealment embedded in iconoclasm as a general condition of pictorial formulation or iconicity. From the Jewish prohibition on image, Boehm points out, the image is interpreted neither as a sign, substitute or thing, not according to the idea of depiction, "**but rather as an apprehensible process which bears a striking similarity to language.**"

In *Composition with Twelve Tones*, Schoenberg described the affinity between music and language as grammatical in structure:

**Comparable to the effect of punctuation in the construction of sentences, of subdivision into paragraphs, and of fusion into chapters; this affinity to language is mirrored in the construction of the composition, "the shape and size" of it, dynamics and tempo, ... instrumentation and orchestration.**

Schoenberg's conflation of music and language is consistent with the idea that Jews have no tradition in the plastic arts. As noted by **Kalman P. Bland**, "Jewish aniconism implies that



Jews are a People of the Book rather than a People of the Image. Proponents of Jewish aniconism deny the existence of authentic Jewish traditions in painting, sculpture, and architecture. They concede that Jews imitate, in production and reception, the foreign art of their host or neighboring cultures. ... The Hebrews tended to think of understanding as a kind of hearing, whereas the Greeks thought of it more as a kind of seeing."



**Vasily Kandinsky's Impression III (Concert), painted immediately after attending a concert featuring Schoenberg's music in Munich on 2 January 1911**

As ordinarily understood, truth results from the relationship between language and the world. It does not apply to the decorative arts or music where the traditional purpose was to produce an aesthetic feeling of appreciation — "aesthetic hedonism" or pleasure. However, Steven Beller cites Schoenberg's maxim "music should not decorate, it should be true," and suggests that his explicit invocation of musical logic (most obviously in his serialism) represents an "invasion of the world of aesthetics by the ethical impulse of truth."

Beller comments that "it does not seem improbable that this stemmed from attitudes whose origins lay in his Jewish background." Nicholas Cook agrees: "The whole debate about ornamentation ... might be seen as resulting from the application to art of traditional Jewish thinking."

The Jewish position, inclined to abstraction as in the work of Schoenberg or Kraus, "stood in tension with the aesthetic hedonism of the official Catholic culture of Austrian society." No wonder, then, that shouting and scuffling accompanied the 1908 premiere of Schoenberg's Second Quartet in Vienna — a work that certainly did not result in aesthetic pleasure in the audience. A near-riot erupted on March 31, 1913, at an orchestral concert in Vienna in which works by Mahler, Berg, Webern, Zemlinsky, and Schoenberg were played.

As Carl Schorske points out,

**The system Schoenberg thus devised was no return to the hierarchical, privileged order of the diatonic system. Yet its democracy of twelve tones would cohere again in a systematic way: in a hidden order, created by the composer — one in which above and below, forward and back, were related visibly to the analytic mind, even though not generally accessible to the listening ear. ... Schoenberg as psychological Expressionist confronted his listener with an art whose surface was broken, charged with the full life of feeling of man adrift and vulnerable in the ungovernable universe; yet beneath it he posited out of his own powers a subliminal, inaudible world of rational order that would integrate the chaos. Here liberated dissonance became a new harmony; psychological**

**chaos, a meta-sensuous order. ... Thus Schoenberg the artist, even as he turned back to the faith of his fathers and submission to God, became man the creator, what Goethe would have called 'der kleine Gott der Welt.'**

At a personal level, Schoenberg was hardly a moral icon. Richard Taruskin **points out** that Schoenberg's personality "**was as absolutist and despotic as any dictator's,**" and that "**his personal relationships could be repellantly exploitative.**" Schoenberg's only name for skeptics, adversaries, or opponents was "enemies."

Nor was he shy about his own accomplishments. In endless pronouncements and anecdotes, Taruskin points out, Schoenberg claimed to have inherited the role of the Hegelian *Weltgenie* ("world-genius"). He loved to recall the answer that he gave an officer who asked him whether he was *the* Arnold Schoenberg: "**Somebody had to be, nobody else volunteered, so I answered the call.**"

Nor are Schoenberg's own pronouncements on his role as a revolutionary to be taken at face value. The big step that others called the leap into "atonality," a term that he deplored for its negativity, Schoenberg called *pantonality* or the "emancipation of dissonance." But, as Taruskin points out, it was not dissonance itself that had been emancipated: It was the composer who was liberated "**from the constraints of 'voice leading rules' whereby dissonance was subordinated to consonance in traditional harmony and counterpoint.**"

The assertion that Schoenberg's atonality represents a consequence of the chromaticism of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* has been commonplace for quite some time. **Heinrich Schenker** held that Wagner was directly to blame for the excesses of Schoenberg and his school. But, as Richard Taruskin points out, the Wagnerian "crisis of tonality" was not Wagnerian at all: "**It was read back into Wagner by Schoenberg's apologists:**"

**Wagner used the chromaticism of *Tristan und Isolde* to delay to the point of torture the harmonic resolution that would symbolize the slaking of sexual desire. That harmonic tension ... was the mainspring that controlled the syntax of what we now call "tonal" music. Did the delays caused by Wagner's chromaticism attenuate that harmonic tension? Don't be silly. They only magnified it, vastly so. Wagner's chromaticism gave tonality a new source of strength and expressivity. The consequences Schoenberg drew from Wagner's musical style were entirely idiosyncratic and ahistorical, inevitable only in eyes blinded by "dialectic." To say the very least, they had nothing to do with Wagner's creative aims, least of all in *Tristan*.**

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Schoenberg's style recognized "**no distinction between consonance and dissonance, so that harmonically speaking, literally anything goes.**" Schoenberg once cracked to a pupil, "**Now that I've emancipated dissonance, anybody can be a composer.**" As Taruskin emphasizes, removing the qualitative distinction between consonance and dissonance "**eliminates the concept of the one being beautiful and the other ugly.**"

"**The beginnings of Dada,**" as Tristan Tzara declared, "**were not the beginnings of art, but of disgust.**" That disgust was reflected in Schoenberg's banal use of language in *Die Sanftergebenen*: "O wie schön lebt sich's doch im Dreck" (Oh, how beautiful it is to live in the muck-dirt).

Without Schoenberg, undoubtedly, "**our era would have made a different sound.**" Doubtless it would have been much more pleasing to European ears.

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